

Spanning the Gap

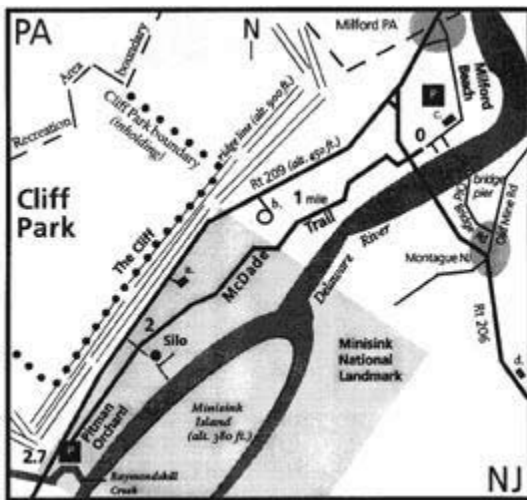
History along McDade Trail II Milford Beach to Pitman Orchard



U.S. Dept. of the Interior
National Park Service

Spanning the Gap
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McDade Trail from Milford Beach to Pitman Orchard



- a. Flying Hawks Model Airfield
Milepost 19
- b. Old Milford Dump
(NO ENTRY)
- c. 1910 Blood Farmhouse (Private Residence)
- d. Neldon-Roberts Stone House
(M.A.R.C.H.)

*For everyone's safety, please observe the **Rules of the Road** for McDade Trail, posted at trailheads, before you hike or bike.*

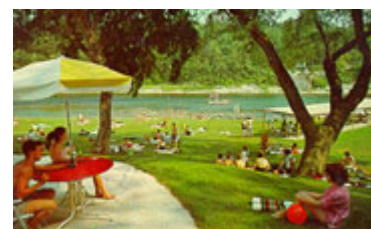
- *Hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing only are permitted. **NO** motor vehicles are permitted.*
- *Pets are restricted, especially in summertime.*

A pay phone is located at Smithfield Beach. For emergencies call **(800) 543-HAWK**, which is **(800) 543-4295**.

Fields, forest, and cliffs provide varied scenery on this 2.7-mile planned addition to the 37-mile McDade Recreational Trail. From Milford Beach, this section southbound is mostly flat, with one short steep climb and a few short rolls just south of the Milford-Montague bridge. The trail runs across open farmland; water and a hat or sunscreen are a must in summer! Hiking, biking, and crosscountry skiing are permitted.

Milford Beach and Bob's Beach (mile 0)

Until the end of World War II, this beach area was farmland renewed by regular river floods. A Methodist church built here in 1835 had to be abandoned because of the constant overflows. In 1945, Robert Blood, whose family had owned and farmed the land here for years, developed a facility



Postcard of Bob's Beach.
(Courtesy of Pike County Historical Society, Milford PA.)

known as Bob's Beach. This popular site boasted picnic pavilions, a snack bar and patio, a diving float, boats for hire, and a beach house (which may have used the old church foundation.)

Since those days, the town of Milford has spread and the farmland has retreated southward. The National Park Service developed modern beach facilities and boat ramps here by the late 1980s, and the only structure Bob would remember is the large house at the parking lot, built around 1910. But he is not totally forgotten: long-time residents of Milford occasionally still refer to this spot as "Bob's Beach."



Across to Montague (*mile .25*)

The 1950s concrete span now linking PA Rt. 209 and NJ Rt. 206 is the fifth bridge over the Delaware at about this point, the first having replaced a ferry in 1826. (An old bridge pier still stands on the New Jersey side across from Milford Beach.)

The village of Montague NJ, terminus of 3 turnpikes, once lined Old Bridge and Old Mine Roads. Today, only fragments of the village remain and the once-open vista from the village across fields and down to the river has filled in with trees.

(Above) Two views of Milford Beach in the 1970s, before the present-day development of bath houses.



Milford-Montague Bridge today.

Milford Cliff (*mile 1.5*)

The Cliff is part of the eastern fringe of the Pocono Plateau, an eroded ridge slit from west to east by streams like Raymondskill Creek. The Cliff runs 3 miles southwest from Milford, plunging from its 900-foot edge to the floodplain and river 500 feet below.

Close to New York City film studios, and seeming as they did to Easterners to be very rugged landscape, the cliffs were once the locale for "western" films, such as those made by Tom Mix, flamboyant radio and silent film star of the 1920s and 1930s.

Atop the cliffs was a large inholding within the recreation area, owned by the Buchanan family since 1803. Cliff Park Inn, located at the northern end of the property, began as an 1820 farmhouse and has been owned and operated by the Buchanans since 1900. A 9-hole golf course opened to the public in 1913, and has been continually expanded. In 2002 Harry Buchanan sold Cliff Park for \$5,000,000 to the Conservation Fund, and this year the recreation area purchased it from the Conservation Fund. The Inn and golf course will continue to operate.



Mary Pickford and Walter Miller on location at Cliff Park in D.W. Griffiths' *The Informer*, a Civil War silent released in 1912. Below them is Model Farm; the Delaware River at Minisink Island gleams in the distance. (Courtesy: Pike County Historical Society Milford PA)

(Below) A section of Milford Cliff from McDade Trail.

(Below, left) View of the Cliff from Flying Hawks airfield.
(Below, right) The valley floor at the base of the Cliff.



Farming the Floodplain (*Snyder Silo*) (*mile 2.1*)



This concrete silo is all that survived a 1950s fire at the Snyder Farm, a large dairy operation with numerous outbuildings. Early silos were made of wood, and after World

War I taller silos of glazed-tile blocks appeared. After 1945, still larger silos like this one were built of concrete staves.

These fields are still farmed under the park's agricultural lease program. Hedgerows provide shelter, and corn cobs left behind provide food for park wildlife.

(Left) Snyder Farm Silo from Flying Hawks Airfield.



The only housing opportunity today at Snyder Farm. (The Snyder silo is behind the birdhouse.)

Minisink National Landmark (mile 1.25-mile 2.7+)



(Left) Minisink Island in 1922, looking south and west from Milford Cliffs, photographed by a participant of Gifford Pinchot's Yale summer school sessions. The island is entirely under cultivation. The curving line of trees along the far side of the island runs along a course of water called the Bennekill, which separates the larger Minisink Island in the foreground from Everett's Island in the background and to the east. Today the island is almost completely reclaimed by forest and undergrowth.

At the lonely dirt crossroad in the shadow of the Snyder silo is perhaps the best place to consider not only Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*, but the terrain directly to the east. Low-lying Minisink Island, which stretches nearly two miles down the Delaware River, lies beyond the line of trees on the Pennsylvania shore. The island was once the centerpiece of a large Native American settlement extending onto both riverbanks, where the Delaware River, the Minsi Path to the New Jersey shore, and the Minisink Trail southward along the river to the



A dig in the Minisink District reveals post holes (marked by stakes) of a native long-house.

area of Philadelphia, all converged. The federal government set aside 1,320 acres here in 1993 as *Minisink National Landmark* to protect this archeological resource.

Pitman Orchard and Model Farm (mile 2.7)



At the foot of the cliffs once lay Model Farm, a tract purchased in 1850 by Ebenezer Warner. Apparently an

enterprising soul, Warner also commuted by scow to farmland on Minisink Island, served as a federal marshal seeking draft evaders in the Civil War, and scavenged lumber from timber rafts that foundered in the river at the Minisink rifts. He was married to Emily Buchanan, whose father established the Cliff Park property.

The name Model Farm may derive from the success of Warner's operation. Another explanation is that in 1915, when Oregon apples were fetching a good price, the Department of Agriculture established a "Model Orchard" program in every Pennsylvania county to demonstrate orchard care, with weekly visits by experts. The orchard at the end of this section of trail, known as the Pitman Orchard, dates from 1939, but may have been associated with the Model Orchard program and Warner's Farm.

Editor's Note: Trail construction will continue in future years and eventually link this segment to the initial segment of the trail, which runs north from Hialeah near Shawnee PA to Turn Farm trailhead near Bushkill PA.

(Left) Postcard of Model Farm, Minisink Island, and the river valley, taken from where the Pickford and Miller (See above) stood. (Courtesy of Pike County Historical Society, Milford PA.)



Postcard view looking north from the cliffs. Minisink Island is at far right; Model Farm at the left. (Courtesy of Pike County Historical Society, Milford PA.)



"Farming the Flood plain", a view from park archives looking north from the area of Model Farm (NPS photo)